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OCI No 0648/65

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WEEKLY REPORT



THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1 December 1965

**INTELLIGENCE AND REPORTING SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE INTERAGENCY
VIETNAM COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

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OCI No. 0648/65

Published by the Directorate of Intelligence
Central Intelligence Agency

THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM
(25 November - 1 December 1965)

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(The Weekly Report on the Situation in South Vietnam
is based on contributions from CIA, DIA, and INR; it
is edited and published by CIA without final coordina-
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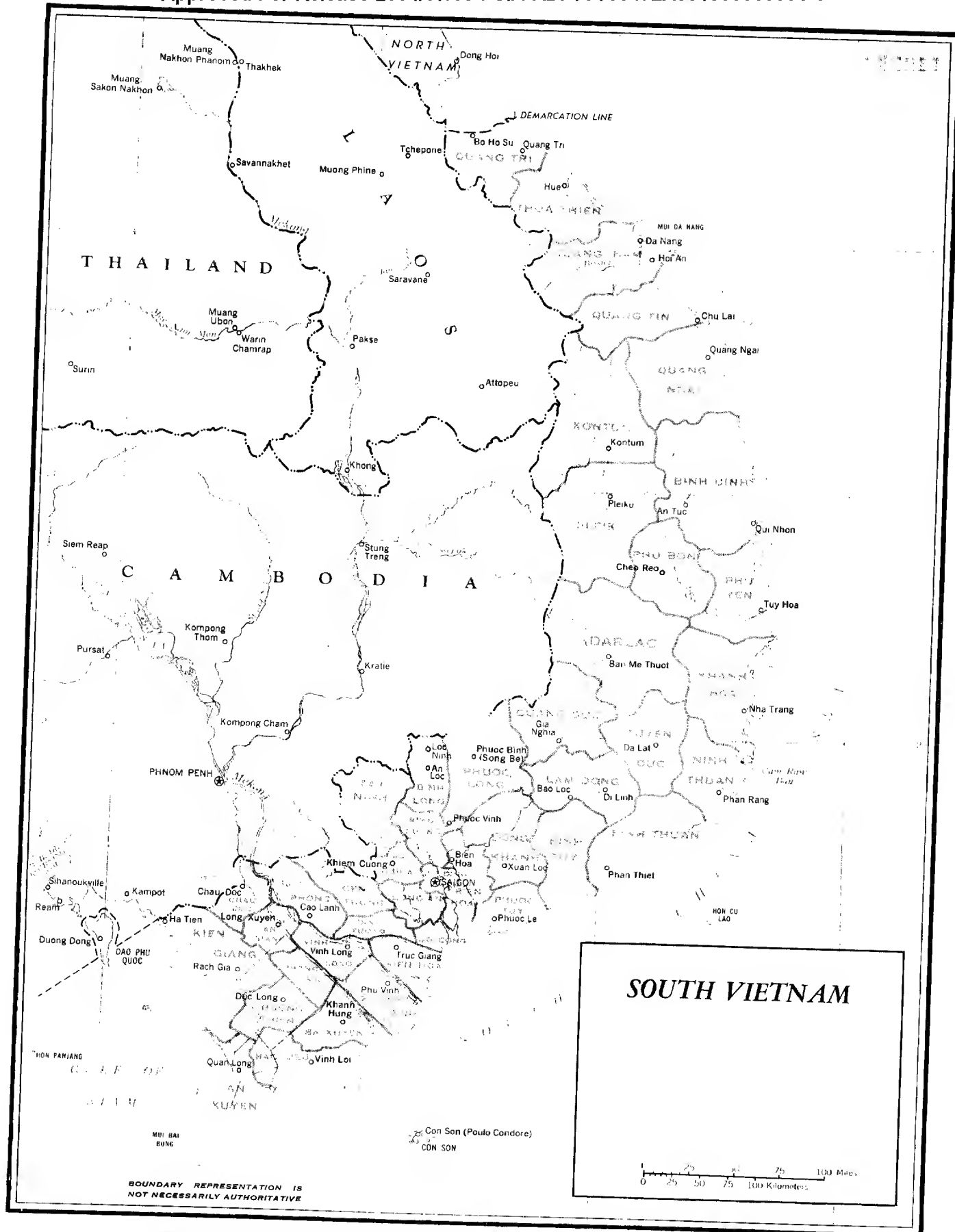
THE WEEK IN PERSPECTIVE

Combat activity continued at a high level during the past week, with the Viet Cong attacking bivouac areas and isolated outposts of government troops while successfully avoiding contact with allied-initiated operations. The most significant actions were multibattalion attacks launched by the Viet Cong on 22 and 27 November against a South Vietnamese regiment operating in Binh Duong Province just north of Saigon. Total Viet Cong - initiated incidents during the week ending 27 November numbered the highest of any week of the war to date.

The political situation in South Vietnam continued undisturbed last week, although signs of internal weaknesses in the Ky cabinet and rumors of possible ministerial changes persist.

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I. THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

A. POLITICAL SITUATION

1. The political scene remained unusually quiet during the past week. However, continued rumors of possible cabinet changes may reflect concern over political stagnation and lack of clear-cut progress.

2. There have been indications that Premier Ky, aware of the need for a more dynamic government image, may be pressing for more direct authority and for policies of greater austerity. He is reported to have been greatly impressed with the efficiency of the Seoul regime during his recent visit to South Korea. Since his return, he has indicated that he intends to be less lenient with the Saigon press and less amenable toward frequent discussions with newsmen. Apparently to end speculation over a possible loosening of controls as a result of the Directorate's plans to set up a committee to draft a constitution, Ky recently told the press that no early return to greater civilian control was envisaged.

3. In a discussion of his plans with US Special Assistant Lansdale on 30 November, Ky outlined some of his thinking on the evolution of the government. He said he was setting a target date of two years for the task of holding some type of popular election to vote on a new constitution and government; this date, he indicated, was determined by an estimate that with continued military successes and a strong pacification program, it might be possible within two years to exert adequate control over about 51 percent--a "simple majority"--of the population. Ky added that Chief of State General Thieu was insisting that in the meantime, an advisory council of about 70 persons be established by early 1966. Ky commented that to prevent such a council from degenerating into political opportunism and criticism of the government, he felt it must be set up apart from the governmental framework as a kind of "debating society" concerned with such issues as the development of a two- or three-party system.

4. Ky, meanwhile, continues to be the target of some sniping, both directly and behind his back, on

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[redacted]
the part of certain official elements. [redacted]

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[redacted] More

serious, perhaps, are attacks from both within and without the government on several cabinet members and officials responsible for the government's economic policies. The US Embassy believes that Ky's economic team is no longer fulfilling its initial promise of efficiency and harmony, and that Ky himself is vacillating in his support for the team and in his amenability to its advice. With the prospect of increasingly complex economic problems, this situation could have a serious effect on the strength of the government.

5. By the device of a decree involving the English and French equivalents of the Vietnamese Army's general officer ranks, South Vietnam's top generals have in effect promoted themselves in relation to their US counterparts without having had to resort to formal promotions. Henceforth, the one-star rank of sub-brigadier or aspirant general is to be translated as brigadier general; several three-star corps commanders who were formerly called "major general" will now be called "lieutenant general." The highest rank, with five stars, will be equivalent to a French "marshal."

6. Two officers sought for complicity in an abortive coup attempt in September 1964 reportedly surrendered to the government last week, and are expected to be tried for their part in the coup attempt. One of the two is former 7th Division commander Colonel Huynh Van Ton, whose troops provided the bulk of the coup force. Another officer involved in the same plot, Colonel Dong Hieu Nghia, recently surrendered despite the fact that he was under a death sentence handed down earlier "in absentia;" he was retried last month and acquitted. It is possible that Colonel Ton and the other returnee, a Captain Tran Uong, may receive similarly lenient treatment,

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and that their surrenders result from the present government's policy of disposing of pending trial cases in a fashion that will reduce the number of potential dissidents on the political scene.

7. The Viet Cong Liberation Front on 27 November in announcing a decision to release two American military prisoners held since November 1963, pegged their decision to "repentance" by the prisoners and to appreciation for domestic American opposition to the war in Vietnam. The two prisoners, Specialist Claude McClure and Sergeant George Smith, subsequently turned up at a Cambodian border post and were authorized transit of Cambodia pending return to the US. The two have not as yet been returned to US control, but in the company of a Front representative, they held a press conference in Phnom Penh in which they declared that they had been well treated and that they expected to oppose US policy in Vietnam when they returned home. The Front has broadcast a statement recorded by at least one of the prisoners in which he declares his sympathy with the "justness" of the Viet Cong cause, and it seems evident that their release was granted by the Communists in the expectation of favorably exploiting such statements.

8. The Front has broadcast a new appeal for 15 minutes of silence by the people of Saigon and Gia Dinh on 19 December, the anniversary of the beginning of armed resistance against French rule, supposedly to honor Vietnamese patriots and American martyrs who have died in the cause of opposition to "US imperialism" in Vietnam. In view of the obvious lack of any popular response in major cities to an earlier Viet Cong appeal for a one-hour general strike on 15 October as part of a "hate America" campaign, the Front's willingness to risk another failure is surprising. The appeal, however, appears to reflect Viet Cong determination to step up political agitation among urban elements, and to associate themselves with the current US protest movement.

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Economic Situation

9. Retail prices resumed their upward trend but are still below the levels of a month ago. Prices of construction materials also continued to rise, but gold and dollar prices have remained virtually unchanged over the last two weeks. Dollars ranged from VN \$162 to VN \$165; MPCs (script) were down a little to VN \$121-123; and a dollar's worth of gold leaf rose slightly to VN \$215.

10. Public protests have occurred in central Vietnam over the high price of imported PL 480 or Thai rice, a result of freight charges and generally higher rice prices in the US and Thailand. If the price rise continues, rice prices in Hué would reach VN \$1,240 per 100 kilograms, and several senior GVN civil servants have indicated it may be necessary to subsidize rice prices in Hué.

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B. MILITARY SITUATION

1. Combat activity continued at a high level during the week as the Viet Cong attacked GVN bivouac areas and isolated outposts while avoiding contact with allied-initiated operations.

2. Significant actions occurred on 22 and 27 November in Binh Duong Province, III Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ) when multibattalion Communist forces attacked the 7th Regiment (GVN). In other actions, the Viet Cong attempted to take advantage of low cloud ceilings and heavy rain by attacking a series of regional and popular force posts and a GVN Ranger battalion along Route 1 in Phu Yen, Binh Dinh, and Quang Ngai provinces.

3. During the week of 20-27 November, the Viet Cong instigated 1,038 incidents, the highest weekly total of the war. Significantly, the increase is attributable mainly to acts of terrorism. The previous high followed the Diem coup, when 1,021 incidents were reported during the week of 31 October - 6 November 1963. Viet Cong attacks increased to 20, as against 14 the previous week; there were 679 terrorist acts compared to 505; sabotage continued at a high level, with 147 incidents this week matching last week's 146. The kill ratio in the government's favor increased to 5.7 to 1 from 3.78 to 1.

4. Communist weapons losses fell to 393 from the previous weekly peak of 1,161; their known casualties were 1,539 killed and 70 captured, a drop from last week's record 2,262 and 136. Allied totals also fell. South Vietnamese casualty figures were 240 killed, 470 wounded, and 135 missing or captured, compared to 357, 807, and 106. US forces lost 33 killed, 108 wounded, and five captured, a sharp decline from last week's record 240, 470, and six. Casualty figures for the 27 November attack against the 7th Regiment (GVN) are not included. Reported government losses during this action were 226 killed (7 US); 400 wounded (9 US), and 50 missing (1 US). Viet Cong casualties are unknown.

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GVN/Allied Activities

5. The combined US-GVN operation in the Plei Me area terminated, with no important contact after 19 November. A related GVN operation, THANH PHONG 7, terminated on 27 November with the return of the airborne brigade (GVN) to the Duc Co Special Forces camp in western Pleiku Province. Friendly casualties were 24 killed and 55 wounded. The Viet Cong lost 270 killed (US body count), 11 captured, 57 weapons, and a large quantity of medical supplies. A large-scale combined operation, NEW LIFE, involving elements of the 173d Airborne Brigade (US), the 1st Infantry Division (US), and the 10th Division (GVN), was initiated in Binh Tuy and Long Khanh provinces to relieve Viet Cong pressure, protect the rice harvest, and relocate inhabitants.

6. During the period 20-27 November, GVN/allied operations of battalion or larger size again decreased in number, from 93 to 82, with 36 contacts resulting. In 21,197 small-unit actions, there were 214 contacts; US small-unit contacts again outnumbered those of the Vietnamese, 158 to 56, although GVN forces conducted more than eight times as many small-unit actions.

7. B-52 Stratofortress strikes were flown against Viet Cong installations in Tay Ninh, Binh Duong, and Binh Tuy provinces, bringing the total of such raids to 96 at the end of November. No significant naval activities were reported; sea, river, and coastal forces searched 4,687 junks and 17,314 persons with negative results.

Communist Activities

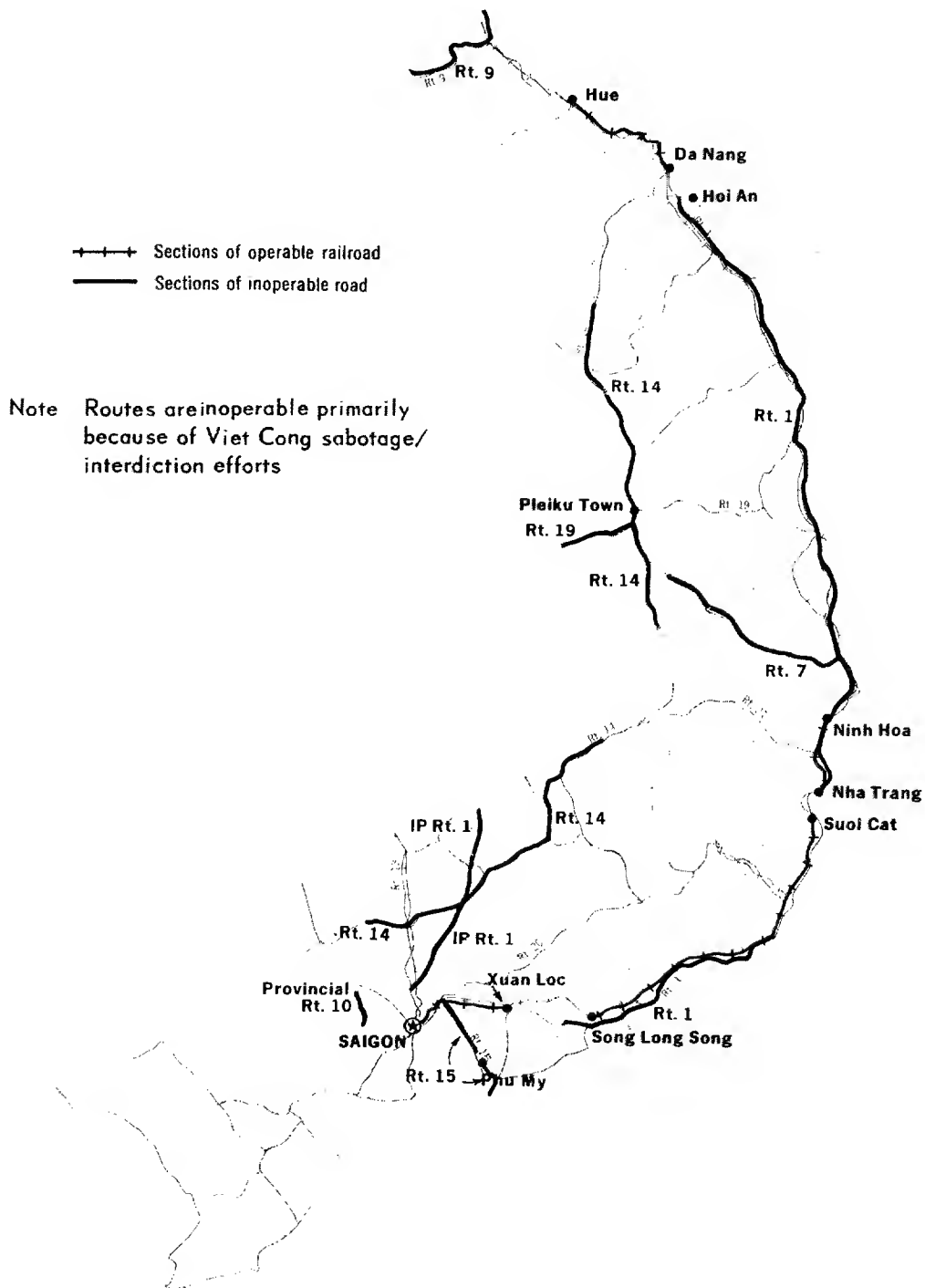
8. Military actions this week involved primarily Viet Cong rather than PAVN forces. The scene of major engagements shifted from Pleiku Province in II CTZ to Binh Duong Province in III CTZ.

9. In the I CTZ, a regiment-size Communist force attacked the GVN 37th Ranger Battalion near Quang Ngai. The ranger battalion lost 68 killed, 80 wounded, and three missing as a result of the action. Viet Cong losses were 225 killed and 85 weapons seized. There is increasing evidence that the 18th Regiment (PAVN) was involved in

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CURRENT OPERATIONAL STATUS OF MAJOR TRANSPORTATION ROUTES AND COASTAL RAILROAD



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the attack and had recently moved from northern Binh Dinh Province to Quang Ngai Province. Other enemy activity in the I CTZ consisted of harassing fire directed primarily against US Marines.

10. Major Viet Cong - initiated activities in the II Corps area consisted of battalion-size attacks against a regional force company at Ngan Son and against an outpost at Tuy An in Phu Yen Province. Initial reports indicate that the Tuy An attack was conducted by elements of the 3d VC Regiment and two PAVN companies, probably from the 95th Regiment. Other Communist activity in the II CTZ included small-scale attacks in Darlac, Binh Dinh, and Phu Yen provinces.

11. On 27 November at the Michelin rubber plantation in Binh Duong Province, III CTZ, the Viet Cong achieved complete surprise in a dawn attack on the 7th Regiment (GVN) as this three-battalion force was preparing to move out to follow-up a B-52 strike. The Viet Cong delivered mortar fire on friendly positions and overran the GVN regiment's command post. The battalions were prevented from going to the assistance of the regimental command post by Viet Cong situated in well chosen blocking positions. The conflict lasted for approximately four hours, after which the Viet Cong broke contact. The 1st and 3rd battalions of the 7th Regiment were rendered ineffective, and friendly casualties included the commanding officers of the regiment and of the 1st and 3rd battalions.

12. Viet Cong activity in the IV CTZ continued at a high level. Four attacks were made against lightly defended outposts and bivouac areas. The airfield at Soc Trang was subjected to a mortar attack, and throughout the area the Viet Cong engaged in harassing fire and sabotage incidents.

13. National Route 1 is closed from Hoi An, Quang Nam Province, to Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa Province, and in Binh Thuan, Binh Tuy, and Hau Nghia provinces. In Quang Tri Province, Route 9 is closed. Route 14 is closed in Kontum, Pleiku, Quang Duc, Phuoc Long, and Binh Long provinces. Route 19 is closed west of Pleiku city. In

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Bien Hoa Province, Route 15 is closed. Interprovincial Route 1 is closed in Binh Duong and Phuoc Long provinces. Provincial Route 10 is closed in Hau Nghia Province.

14. The national railroad is closed between Xuan Loc, Long Khanh Province, and Song La Song, Binh Thuan Province; between Suoi Dau and Nha Trang in Khanh Hoa Province; between Ninh Hoa, Khanh Hoa Province, and Da Nang, Quang Nam Province; and north of Hué, Thua Thien Province, to the Demilitarized Zone.

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C. RURAL CONSTRUCTION

1. According to recent USOM reporting, 22 local government officials were killed and 23 abducted during the month of October, compared with 42 and 33, respectively, in September. Between 1 January and 31 October, a total of 450 officials have been killed and 709 kidnapped. These figures have fluctuated considerably from month to month and no overall trend is discernible.

2. In the Capital Military Region during the month of November, three hamlet officials were assassinated by the Viet Cong; throughout the whole of the Hop Tac area there were an additional three such murders. This could be an indication that the Viet Cong are attempting to further solidify their position in areas immediately adjacent to Saigon.

3. As of 21 November, the total number of refugees in South Vietnam stood at 727,901, with 266,502 of them permanently resettled and the remainder in temporary shelter areas. There are now a total of 250 temporary refugee shelters operating throughout the country. Since early October, only about 8,500 refugees have been resettled while the total count of refugees has risen by nearly 58,000.

	3 October	21 November	Net Change
In temporary shelters:	422,000	461,399	+ 39,399
Permanently resettled:	258,000	266,502	+ 8,502
Total:	670,000	727,901	+ 57,901

4. As shown by the preceding figures the rate of refugee input has exceeded the rate of resettlement by about six to one, with the burden of supporting the refugees in temporary shelters falling directly on the GVN as assisted by USOM. The only hopeful aspect in the situation seems to be that if the rate of refugee input between 21 November and the end of the year does not markedly exceed that of the period 3 October to 21 November (57,901), then the total number of refugees will not reach the 1,000,000 mark that GVN-USOM officials had been using as a planning figure.

5. Part of the trouble with the refugee problem is the apparent inability of the GVN to fix a definitive

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refugee policy. USOM officials recently presented to the Premier's office a draft refugee policy statement that would, if adopted, centralize the refugee relief functions within the GVN. At the present time, the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Rural Construction have been instructed by Premier Ky to work together on refugee relief pending a final resolution of the procedural problem.

6. According to GVN statistics, the total number of Chieu Hoi returnees for the past week was 556, a drop of 471 from the previous week's total of 1,027. The biggest fall-off was in the number of civilian returnees, only 28 for the current reporting period versus 413 for the previous period. Military returnees totalled 407, as opposed to the 493 recorded in the previous week. Communist political cadres who rallied to the government side numbered 114, only one less than the previous week. Draft dodgers/deserters numbered seven this week versus the six counted in the previous reporting period.

7. According to a recent report from the consulate at Hué, the security situation in Quang Tin Province has deteriorated so badly in the past year that the GVN is now in full control of only about 10 square kilometers--namely, the province capital of Tam Ky and eight nearby hamlets. There are a total of 426 hamlets in Quang Tin. Even the US Marine Corps area of responsibility around Chu Lai is inhabited by a substantially hostile population, and is subject to continuing infiltration and small-unit harassment.

8. The province government estimates that at the present time only about 37,200 out of a total population of some 355,000 are living in secure areas. The Viet Cong are believed to control 179,500, including about 15,000 Montagnards in the extensive mountainous areas of the province where the GVN does not even attempt to exert its influence.

9. Lines of communications in Quang Tin are described generally as "open," which means in essence that they are not physically impassable. Civilian traffic is largely unmolested except for occasional taxation stops. However, any military or government traffic outside the immediate area of Tam Ky must move by convoy preceded by a road-clearing operation.

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II. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BLOC

A. MILITARY

1. Six additional surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites were discovered in North Vietnam this week, bringing the total to 52. Sites 47 through 49 were discovered in the Haiphong area [REDACTED] [REDACTED] bringing to ten the number of SA-2 sites defending this vital port city. Sites 47 and 48 extend SAM coverage over adjacent coastal waters in the vicinity of Cat Ba Island where a number of naval anchorage areas are located.

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2. Sites 50 and 51 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] are from 24 to 28 miles west-northwest of Hanoi, and number 51 is apparently still under construction. The final site, number 52, was detected in the Thanh Hoa area [REDACTED]

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3. US Air Force aircraft attacked the Dong Em SAM support facility for the second time on 27 November. Preliminary pilot reports indicated that 17 buildings were destroyed, three damaged, and two cave entrances hit with 3,000-pound bombs. This support facility is the only one of its kind found to date in North Vietnam. This type of installation normally houses all the equipment needed for the transporting, assembling, storing, maintaining, checking, and fueling of missiles. It also stores complete major missile components such as fins, boosters, warheads, and bodies, as well as component parts replacements.

B. POLITICAL

1. Hanoi on 29 November announced that politburo member Le Thanh Nghi had arrived in Peking as head of an economic delegation that is also scheduled to visit Moscow and Pyongyang. As yet, no details have emerged from the negotiations in the Chinese capital. It seems likely, however, that the DRV would be seeking substantial and immediate help to repair the bomb damage to its transportation routes, which in addition to disrupting the inflow of needed equipment may also

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be interfering with the distribution of daily necessities produced in North Vietnam such as clothing and food.

2. In addition to immediate needs, Hanoi may also be seeking commitments from its allies on longer range programs such as the rebuilding of its economy after the fighting stops. If this is part of the current delegation's mission, there may be some hard bargaining, since Peking--or Moscow, for that matter--is not likely to be eager to commit itself in detail at this point to a future reconstruction program.

3. The difficulty Hanoi is apparently having in arranging satisfactory aid commitments from its allies can be measured in part by the fact that Nghi made a similar jaunt less than six months ago. This suggests either that there has been some difficulty in implementing the agreements reached then, or that the situation in North Vietnam has deteriorated to such an extent recently that supplementary aid is now considered necessary. However, it is also possible that Nghi is making an effort to gain better coordination between Moscow and Peking in the assistance they are rendering his country. A 28 November Pravda editorial pointed up the serious effect that the poor relations between the two bloc giants is having on Vietnam. The editorial accused the Chinese of hampering the efforts of the Vietnamese Communists, and of aiding the US by subverting Communist unity and refusing to cooperate with Moscow. Describing the Chinese as "super-revolutionaries," Moscow reasserted its claim that proposals for joint action against "imperialism" have been consistently rejected by Peking.

4. Peking this week continued to give heavy propaganda attention to protests in the US against American policy in Vietnam. The People's Daily on 29 November asserted that the protest march in Washington on 27 November shows that the American people "have begun to feel that they can no longer tolerate the Johnson administration's policy of escalating the war" in Vietnam. The article declared that the present anti-war movement in the US "is quite different" from previous peace campaigns in that it does not stop at

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demanding peace in general terms "but clearly directs its fire at the US ruling circle's policies of aggression and war."

5. Although Peking almost certainly holds an exaggerated impression of the strength and influence of the Vietnam protest movement in the US, the Chinese have indicated that they believe the movement will have a long-range rather than an immediate effect on US policy in Vietnam. Peking probably hopes its heavy coverage of the protest movement will help bolster the morale of the Vietnamese Communists.

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III. THIRD COUNTRY DEVELOPMENTS

A. KHMER SEREI

1. Ambassador Martin, in reply to State Department instructions to the US embassies in Bangkok and Saigon on Thai and Vietnamese support of Khmer Serei activities against Cambodia, reports that he is prepared to make representations to the prime minister but would prefer Thanom to wait until Ambassador Lodge talks to Premier Ky since the GVN role is the most critical. Martin notes that the Thais continue to believe that the US supports Khmer Serei efforts, if only because they feel that the US could stop the entire affair if it wished. Martin also feels that without strong GVN backing of the Khmer Serei, the Thais are not likely to give anything more than nominal support.

2. In conversations with Deputy Ambassador Porter, Premier Ky stated that he had learned after assuming office that considerable sums of money were being paid to the Khmer Serei and that he was puzzled by this since he saw no tangible benefits. He said that although he had agreed at the time to continue supporting the Khmer Serei, he also had made it clear that the support was temporary. Ky promised Porter that he would review the entire question and suspend GVN support, including weapons.

B. CAMBODIA

Secretary General Thinh of the GVN Foreign Ministry informed the US Embassy in Saigon that the Cambodian prime minister had told the GVN through the ICRC that it was interested in sending a delegation to Saigon to discuss the possibility of exchanging prisoners. Thinh has the impression that the Cambodians are thinking of exchanging all Vietnamese prisoners for all Cambodian prisoners. This is especially desirable from the Vietnamese standpoint because of the number of Vietnamese now under death sentence in Cambodia. Foreign Minister Tran Van Do also told our Embassy that this development is another indication that Sihanouk was shifting toward a more

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friendly policy, partly because of recent US/GVN military successes. Do indicated that the GVN is prepared to be receptive to these overtures.

C. DIPLOMATIC ASSIGNMENTS

1. The US Embassy in Saigon reports that another indication of the extreme paucity of qualified Vietnamese diplomatic personnel came to light last week. Although Secretary General Thinh of the Foreign Ministry told an Embassy officer that he is scheduled to be assigned to Geneva to open the Vietnamese mission there, Foreign Minister Do was apparently torn between assigning him to Geneva or to London to replace Ambassador Vu Van Mau, and was also concerned over a suitable replacement for Thinh in the Foreign Ministry. In any event, both Do and Thinh fear that, if he does not leave soon for Geneva, the military leadership will probably find an unqualified military officer for the Geneva post.

D. FREE WORLD AID

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2. IRAN. The Iranian Government and the Iranian Red Lion and Sun Society are preparing to send a medical team consisting of a surgeon, an assistant surgeon, and 20 nurses.

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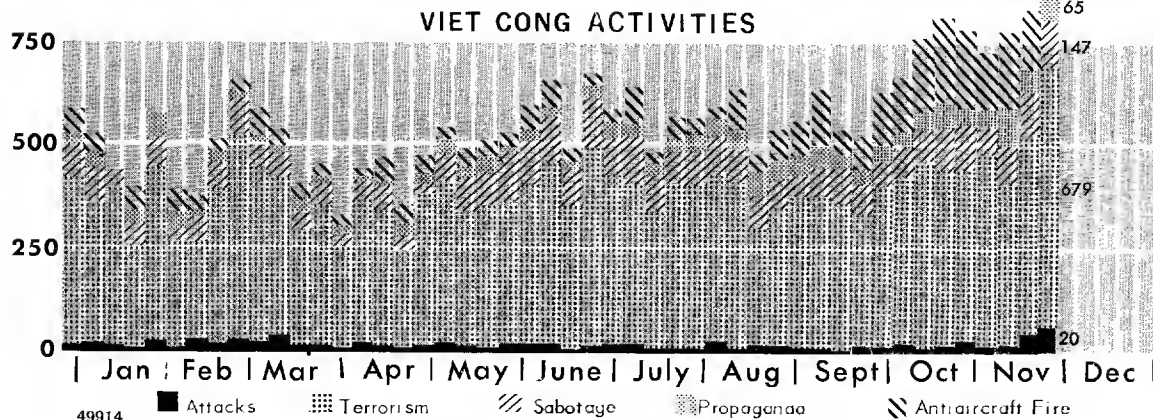
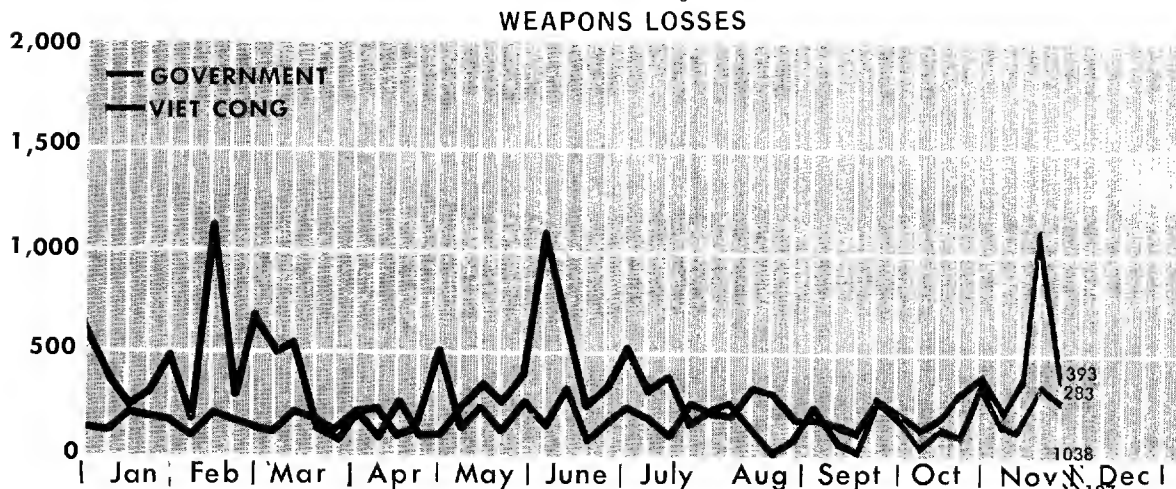
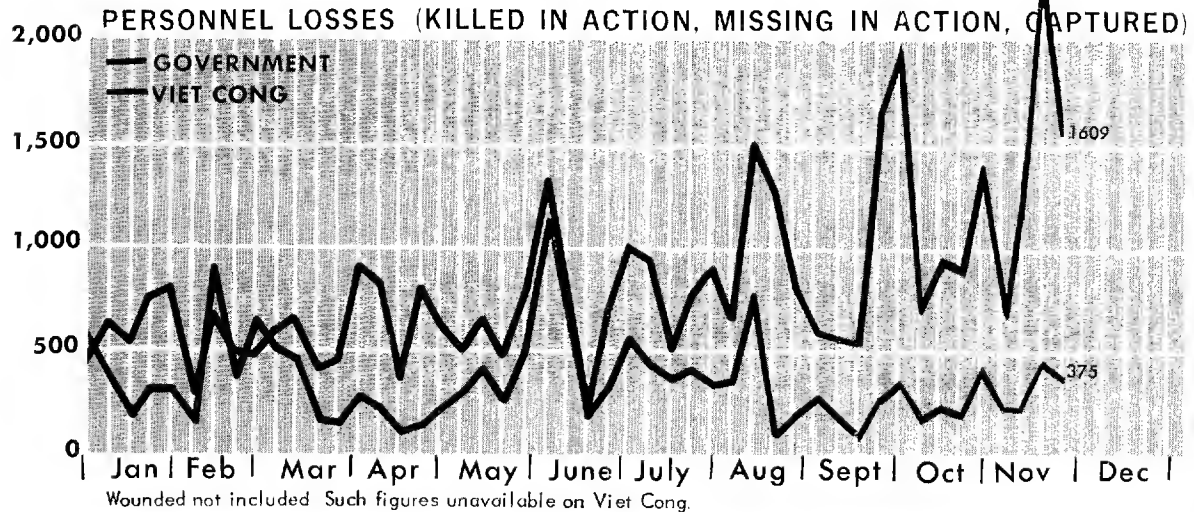
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SOUTH VIETNAM BATTLE STATISTICS, 1965

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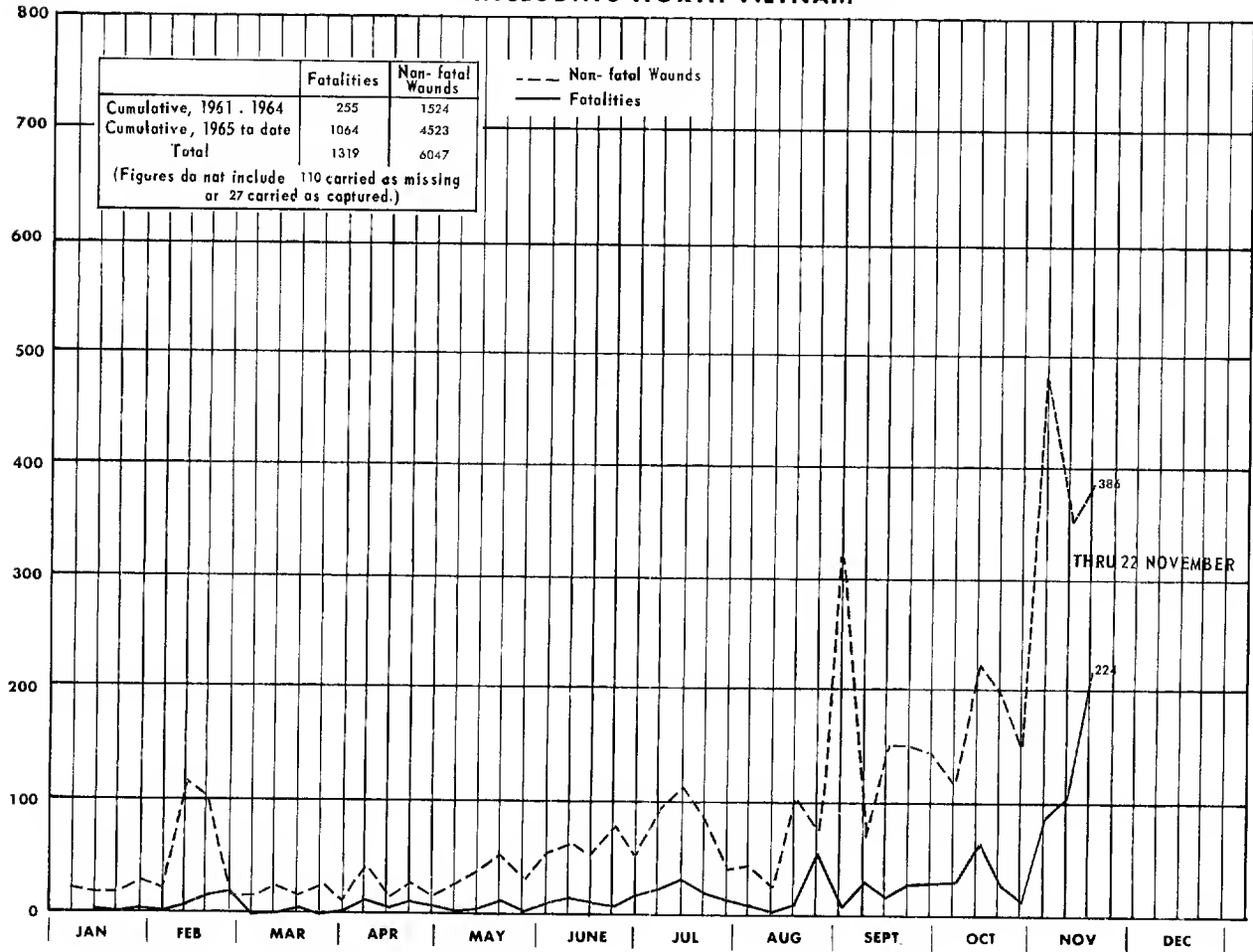
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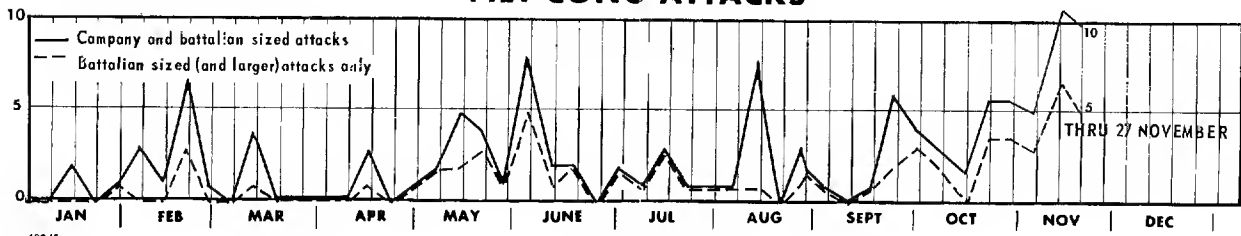
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US COMBAT CASUALTIES IN VIETNAM INCLUDING NORTH VIETNAM



VIET CONG ATTACKS



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